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Out of the Humidor
Cigar Aficionado
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

Dear Marvin,

Crowing over his contribution to toppling Guatemala's democracy in 1954, and blaming JFK for the CIA's rout at the Bay of Pigs, Howard Hunt proves his moral compass is as skewed as is his judgment.[1]

Ironically, Hunt's proud product, "liberated" Guatemala, provides perhaps the best contrast for the relative merits of emancipation by U.S.-directed anticommunists versus liberation by his bete noir, Castro. Although it is horrid and indefensible, Fidel's record shines compared to the succession of U.S.-approved, totalitarian dictators that have tortured Guatemala, killing an estimated 200,000 since Hunt's "victory" in '54. Both the U.N. and the Catholic Church credit the government with over 90% of the murdering[2] (compared to a paltry 3% for the rebels), and the U.N. concluded the U.S. shares the blame.[3]

And what rubbish is his claim that, but for JFK's refusal to approve additional air strikes, the Bay of Pigs invasion "would've been a fete champetre." The recently declassified, 38-year old, report by the CIA's own Inspector General, Lyman Kirkpatrick, reveals that after 300 CIA interviews, he came to the same conclusion as other credible authorities:[4 5] the problem wasn't insufficient air cover, it was the CIA's own "bad planning," "poor" staffing, faulty intelligence, "fragmentation of authority," mistreatment of the exile forces, the "failure [of the CIA] to advise the President that success had become dubious," etc.[6] What's worse is that the CIA charged ahead even *after* it learned that the Russians had advanced knowledge from a leak of the exact date of the planned invasion, a fact the Agency apparently kept from JFK."[7]

Having failed to succeed in smearing JFK by falsifying cables to link him to Diem's death, the Patriot Hunt is at it again – falsifying history to blame Kennedy for The Agency's "perfect failure" at the Bay of Pigs. It's likely that not only would Cuba and Guatemala be better off today without the amoral daring-do's of patriotic scoundrels like E. Howard Hunt, but so would the United States.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Aguilar

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[1] David Giammarco. **The World's Most Famous Spy**. ***Cigar Aficionado,*** December, 2000, p. 84 ff.

[2] **Guatemala – Memory of Silence: Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification; Conclusions and Recommendations**. Published by the United Nation's "Commission for Historical Clarification," 1997. [On page 20 of the report, available by request, it reads, "(Guatemalan) state forces and related paramilitary groups were responsible for 93% of the violations documented by the CEH, including 92% of the arbitrary executions and 91% of forced disappearances." On page 21, by contrast, it reported that "Among the cases registered by the CEH, insurgent actions produced 3% of the human rights violations and acts of violence perpetrated against men, women and children … ."]
Reference was made to this report, which was given to me in Guatemala by a U.N. executive, in "The Atrocity Findings: 'The Historic Facts Must Be Recognized,'" an unbylined story in the ***New York Times*** on February 25, 1999, and "Guatemalan Army Waged 'Genocide,' New Report Finds," by Mireya Navarro in ***New York Times***, 2/25/99, p. 1-A, and in a ***Washington Post*** story, "War Study Censures Military in Guatemala," by Douglas Farah, 2/26/99, p. A-19.
The investigation by the Catholic Church, whose findings closely mirrored those of the CEH, are discussed in: "Murder Comes For the Bishop," by Francisco Goldman, ***The New Yorker***, 3/15/99, p. 60 ff.
[3] The role of the U.S., also explored in the U.N. report, was covered in an article published by the ***Chicago Tribune*** on 2/26/99, "Commission: U.S. Contributed to War in Guatemala," by Paul de la Garza.
[4] Wyden, Peter. **Bay of Pigs – The Untold Story**. New York: *Simon and Schuster*, 1979, p. 326: "Bissell's former student, Mac Bundy, agreed in 1977 that the air strength was not only too small; it was much too small, but he pointed out that that [CIA] planners said nothing about it [to JFK]. 'They didn't say, Look, you've got to double your bet, he observed. He felt that the cancelled [air] strike was only 'a marginal adjustment.'"
[5] Peter Kornbluh, ed. **Bay of Pigs Declassified – The Secret CIA Report on the Invasion of Cuba**. New York: ***New Press***, 1998, p. 12.
[6] Peter Kornbluh, ed. **Bay of Pigs Declassified – The Secret CIA Report on the Invasion of Cuba**. New York: ***New Press***, 1998, p. 11.
[7] Vernon Loeb, "Soviets Knew Date of Cuban Attack," ***Washington Post***, 4/29/2000, p. A-4. [The National Security Archives' Peter Kornbluh, who extracted the files from the CIA, was quoted in this article to say, "there is no indication that that [anyone] at the CIA warned President Kennedy of the leak before the invasion took place."]